

November 2012



KARUNA

Newsletter of the Janssen Spirituality Centre

Karuna – A compassionate heart

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Friends of Janssen Spirituality Centre,

Greetings to all of you, friends, associates, participants.

This is my first letter as the new Director of this Centre. In the short while that I have been at the Boronia house, commonly called the JSC, I realise that, no matter what kind of experiences one may have had previously, a new start is a new start. There are no places that are exactly the same. For me to come from Papua New Guinea to Rockhampton and to Mackay, and then all the way south to Melbourne, is like entering a new world of challenges and possibilities. I said Yes to the invitation of Fr. Tim Norton SVD, my Provincial, to come to JSC because I am interested in the mission and aim of this spirituality centre. To be part of a group of people who want to promote peace and harmony, to me means first of all that I must live a life true to peace and harmony.

I was introduced to the centre by the outgoing Director and now Manager of the Janssen Spirituality Centre, Fr. Michael Hardie SVD, but also by the various people who have supported and continue to support the works and aims of the centre. I was invited to attend and participate in the Lectio Divina, the Thomas Merton Bridges and the Centring prayer programs. I began to meet people who gave and received from the JSC. I was drawn to meet people beyond the gates of the JSC with other inter-faith activities.

One of my first new experiences was to go to an IFTAR Dinner: the breaking of the daily fast during the Moslem celebrations of Ramadan. I listened to the prayer that was sung in Arabic, watched the Suffi dervishes dance, and listened to the speeches of welcome and hope for a fulfilling and peaceful future for all people present. Before the evening finished, I probably exchanged more of my ID cards than at any other time I can remember.

As most of you know, the JSC opened its doors this year 2012, to accommodate for home detention, up to 12 Asylum seekers – young, single men between the ages of 18 and 25, mostly from Afghanistan, but all of them Moslem. This new ministry had the consequence that we were not able to offer over night retreats and other longer overnight spirituality workshops. On the other hand, we have witnessed the physical, emotional and psychological changes from depression to joy and happiness in the young men we have accommodated on our premises. Life is given, life is shared and God will show us the way to go forward as he always does.

Presently I am meeting regularly with a group of JSC supporters and advisors so that we can plan for the new year of 2013 and make the best use of our place for day time and evening session. I am also using my time to get to know what Melbourne is all about and what 'Inter-faith' Melbourne is about. There is a lot to learn.

May I thank you for all your past interest and support, and wish you continued blessing.

Fr. Nick de Groot SVD
(Director)